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DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/TC, EAP/PA, EAP/PD - DAVID FIRESTEIN
DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS, U.S.-CHINA
RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused their coverage November 22 on Taichung Mayor Jason Hu's wife, who remains in a critical condition following a serious car accident last Saturday; on Taipei Mayor Ma Ying-jeou's alleged misuse of the special mayoral allowance; on the upcoming Taipei and Kaohsiung mayoral races; and on Morris Chang, who returned from Vietnam as Taiwan's representative to the 2006 APEC meeting. All papers also covered on inside pages AIT Taipei Director Stephen Young's speech to the American Chamber of Commerce in Taipei Tuesday, in which he mentioned the three agreements the United States hopes to sign with Taiwan and said the United States "encourages Taiwan to negotiate with China to open the Three Links -- especially direct flights -- as soon as possible."

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an analysis in the pro-unification "United Daily News" discussed Young's remarks and said this is the first time that Washington has "encouraged" Taiwan to talk with China over the Three Links issue, a move indicating that Washington has had a fixed view about this issue which is essential to the interests of Washington, Beijing, and Taipei. An opinion piece in the pro-status quo "China Times," on the other hand, discussed the battle between the United States and China over their future interests in East Asia. End summary.

¶3. Cross-Strait Relations

"'Encouraging' [Cross-Strait] Three Links for the First Time, United States Pressures [Taiwan] to Foster Talks [with China]"

Washington correspondent Vincent Chang noted in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (11/22):

"The U.S. government used to keep a distance to the 'cross-Strait Three Links' issue; it even used to avoid mentioning these words and ask both sides [of the Taiwan Strait] to talk about the issue between themselves. But Washington subsequently relented and had AIT Taipei Director Stephen Young talk about it in a speech to the American Chamber of Commerce in Taipei yesterday. During his speech, which was approved by the State Department, Young has for the first time expressed that the United States 'encourages the three links across the Taiwan Strait'; a more important message was that [Washington] urges Taiwan to 'negotiate' with China over the Three Links.

"This message of 'negotiation over the Three Links' is simple and clear, but it is completely different from the contents and level when compared with the United States' consistent [position] in calling for a dialogue between leaders of China and Taiwan. Taiwan has been most concerned about Washington's pressure to 'push for' talks across the Taiwan Strait ever since the period when Lee Teng-hui held the helm. But compared with the fact that China has stated repeatedly that it hopes to establish three links [with

Taiwan], it is self-evident that the United States is targeting Taiwan this time as the one to foster 'talks' [with China]. ...

"Even though the U.S. government has made its attitude of supporting the cross-Straits Three Links increasingly clear ever since early this year, relevant [U.S.] officials continued to avoid using these words. Thus, Young's request yesterday that both sides negotiate over the Three Links showed that [Washington] evidently has had a fixed view about the issue; that it is essential to the interests of the United States, China, and Taiwan. [Young's remarks], as a result, were significant in the way that it indicated the change of attitude on the part of the U.S. government with regard to cross-Straits interaction. ..."

4. U.S.-China Relations

"Battle between the United States and China over East Asia"

Lin Jo-yun, associate professor at Tamkang University's Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, opined in the pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] (11/22):

"... There is little with which Taiwan can exert its power with regard to the issues mentioned in the 'Hanoi Declaration,' which was co-signed among the leaders of the 21 APEC economies this year, such as the resumption of the WTO Doha Round talks, implementation of the 'Hanoi Action Plan,' and sanctions against North Korea. But it is the United States and China, [namely] their competition in the East Asia region, and its connection to the East Asia Summit that deserve our attention. First, the Republican Party headed by U.S. President George W. Bush has suffered a defeat in the mid-term elections. This outcome indicated that the American people are displeased with the war in Iraq, and as a result, Bush has to shift the focus of the American people to Asia. Second, China's swelling influence in Asia has put the United States under pressure, and Washington is concerned that U.S. interests will lose ground in Asia. ..."

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"Judged from the United States' perspective, while being worried about China's rise in Asia, it may also gradually lose its influence among the ASEAN nations. The United States has indeed learned a lesson from the financial crisis that hit Asia from 1997-1998. The excessively tough and severe approach adopted by Washington and the International Monetary Fund in handling the crisis aroused strong complaints from the ASEAN nations, which then began to turn to China, who at the time was committed to the policy of 'befriending your neighbors.' The United States must watch out more carefully this time in strengthening its relationships with the Southeastern Asian countries.

"The United States has had its global strategic concerns in the wake of the September 11 tragedy. To put it simply, on the level of global strategy, Washington puts Muslim countries in the Middle East, such as Iran, as its top priority. As to the regional level, the United States is considering signing a friendly cooperation agreement with the ASEAN nations on the one hand to test the possibility of joining the East Asia Summit, while on the other hand, it is considering showing more support to the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and APEC. After all, the ARF has become the only multilateral security mechanism in East Asia, and strengthening the future development of APEC and the ARF can form a more powerful bilateral connection between the United States and the ASEAN nations. ..."

YOUNG